



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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TALKS PROCESS

Papers submitted to the Talks Chairman on 28th August

Comment

1. All six participants have submitted papers to the Talks Chairman. They broadly reiterate known positions, with however some slight foreshadowing of future proposals.
 - The papers reflect the joint unionist requirement for amendment of the Irish Constitution and their view that joint structures should be via a "Council of the British Isles" (which would confirm rather than qualify the UK status of Northern Ireland).
 - The DUP paper implies that they will probably make all negotiations subject to a reserve in regard to Articles 2 and 3.
 - The British paper is of interest in that it seeks to nudge matters towards a North-South structure which might prove a little more acceptable to nationalists as an alternative to the Agreement than the unionist model.
 - The Irish and the SDLP papers try to keep the focus on the basic unionist/nationalist divide, both within Northern Ireland and in Ireland as a whole, as the key element to be addressed in new structures.

Summary of main points in papers

2. DUP Paper

- Key issue is the "territorial claim" in the Irish Constitution.
- If Northern Ireland is to have "a proper good neighbourly relationship" with the South, removal of the claim is "an imperative".
- Dublin holds the key and must tell us whether they can remove it.
- When the Irish Government "unilaterally indicates its willingness to sponsor the necessary legislation ... unionists will gladly and freely respond by supporting an agreement which embraces the new, friendly and neighbourly relationship that would then develop".
- This would be an umbrella British-Irish Agreement with compartments (i. e. on North/South matters).
- New arrangements should work by unanimity, be on a basis of reciprocity and of practical benefit rather than political.

3. UUP Paper

- Need for "open and unambiguous" acknowledgement of status of Northern Ireland as part of the UK.
- Right of self-determination for Northern Ireland.
- Legal protection of minorities.

- Identity should not be confused with allegiance, since each citizen has a duty to the community, irrespective of allegiance.

- Re-examine existing British-Irish structures, so as to
 - (i) replace Anglo-Irish Agreement by Council of the British Isles;

 - (ii) create under its aegis an "Inter-Irish relations Committee" involving the Irish Government and the Irish/EC Affairs Committee of a devolved administration.

4. SDLP

- Background analysis of identities etc. of the two communities and of benefits of Agreement and of EC membership.

- Creation for new political framework so as to attract support of people in both parts of Ireland.

5. Alliance

- People of Northern Ireland have the right to determine their own future.

- A majority wish to remain in the United Kingdom.

- Large minority have Irish allegiance, which must be reflected in North/South institutions.

- Irish constitutional claim should be replaced by an aspirational clause.

- There should be a Tripartite Council to deal with wider relations.

6. Irish Papers

(a) Constitution

- All constitutional issues on the Table.
- Arrangements under Government of Ireland created difficulties for Northern nationalists.
- Amendment of Irish Constitution could only be carried in the context of a significant package guaranteeing overall progress.

(b) Identity, Allegiance, Fundamental Realities

- Northern Ireland is polarised between two different identities.
- These must be accommodated on a basis of equal respect for both.
- This accommodation must transcend the confines of Northern Ireland.

7. British Paper

- Two identities in Northern Ireland.
- Participants should agree that the status of Northern Ireland is part of the UK, and on rules for changing this.

- There should also be provision for "appropriate, fair and significant" expression for Irish identity of nationalist community both within Northern Ireland and North/South contacts, which the British Government believe should be on an institutional basis, secured by legislation.

- Certain criteria are suggested for consideration (including, interestingly, that new institutions might be "geared to the development of an 'agreed Ireland'" in the sense of forwarding the interest of the people of the island of Ireland.

Department of Foreign Affairs
31 August, 1992